

Agenda Item 4.4. Bycatch Issues

**Information Document:
Draft Gothenburg Declaration vs. EcoQO on
by-catch of harbour porpoises**

Submitted by: WWF



NOTE:
**IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING
THEIR OWN COPIES OF THESE DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**

Secretariat's Note

The attached paper was originally submitted to the meeting of the OSPAR BDC, held in Trondheim, Norway, from 13-17 March 2006.

WWF requested that the declaration be brought to the attention of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee.

OSPAR CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF THE
NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC

MEETING OF THE BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE (BDC)

TRONDHEIM: 13-17 MARCH 2006

Draft Gothenburg Declaration vs. EcoQO on by-catch of harbour porpoises**Presented by WWF****Background**

1. BDC is invited to note ... the proposals for the North Sea Ministerial Meeting on the environmental consequences of fisheries (BDC 06/5/1), and to consider whether any action by OSPAR is needed.
2. The first version of § 36 of the draft Gothenburg Declaration (CONSSO FEB 06/3/1) contained the following sentence: “*Special attention should also be given to the development of fishing gear and fishing methods that will reduce by-catches of mammals and seabirds **down to acceptable levels.***” (emphasis added)
3. Following a proposal raised by the EC (CONSSO FEB 06/3/6), the last segment of the sentence was altered to read “*...**down to the lowest practicable levels**” at the meeting of the Committee of North Sea Senior Officials (Stockholm, 15-16 February 2006). Reference is made to document BDC 06/5/1.*
4. WWF believes that both suggested versions jeopardise and water down what has been agreed by Ministers in Bergen in 2002 and adopted by Parties to ASCOBANS. Bergen Declaration (BD) § 28 reads: “*...to take all necessary measures to minimize incidental catches and/or damage of non-target organisms. ...*”. § 29 reads “*... to aim at reducing the by-catch of harbour porpoises below 1,7% of the best population estimate ...*” and “*... to reduce by-catches of marine mammals to less than 1% of the best available population estimate ...*”.
5. In particular, this element of the draft Gothenburg Declaration is inconsistent with the EcoQO on by-catch of harbour porpoises which was explicitly based on § 29 BD. Reference is made to *Ecological quality element and objective (e): By-catch of harbour porpoises (North Sea pilot EcoQO)* in the Report on North Sea Pilot Project on Ecological Quality Objectives OSPAR 05/5/2-E): The agreed EcoQO is that *the annual by-catch of harbour porpoise should be reduced to levels below 1,7% of the best population estimate.* - and to document BDC 06/2/7-E addressing its implementation.
6. WWF recalls that, in the context of ASCOBANS, the target levels for minimum by-catch reduction of harbour porpoises were based on a scientific rationale defining the unacceptable level of annual by-catch rate at and above which the population would not be able to sustain in the long term, given its reproduction and natural mortality rates.
7. WWF is concerned that the referred text proposed for the Gothenburg Declaration might undermine the political consensus already achieved because it prioritises technical practicability over ecological and conservation needs. It also weakens the incentive to develop innovations in fishing practices and gear techniques with a view to meeting the EcoQO concerned.

Action requested

8. BDC is invited to consider means and possible actions to make the draft Gothenburg Declaration consistent with earlier agreements.